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ABSTRACT

If schools are help young people develop the knowledge, understanding, and skills needed to become effective career planners, administrators must enable career coordinators to fulfill that responsibility. Senior administrators generally have a positive attitude toward career education and guidance. When career coordinators ask for the commitment of senior management, they appear to be seeking support, resources, influence, and leadership. Administrators feel they demonstrate commitment through support, resources, and influence, but not leadership. The career coordinator's role is to plan the school's career education and guidance program, support colleagues delivering the program, and report on progress. Career coordinators are not always located in the most appropriate places within school management structures to do the job expected of them. Career work would benefit from being treated, in terms of management, in a similar way to other curriculum areas--with a clear policy, linked to a development plan that is implemented, and the subsequent practice monitored, reviewed, and evaluated. Administrators should support career coordinators in policy development, request an annual review and development plan, participate in negotiating the partnership agreement, and ask for an accounting of program achievements. Career coordinators must acquire the skill of lobbying for administrator support. (YLB)

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NICEC

Briefing

ED 419 174

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Managing Careers Work in Schools

NICEC

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Young people need opportunities to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to become effective career planners in a changing world of learning and work. If schools are to make such opportunities available to students, the person with designated responsibility for this aspect of the school's work – the careers co-ordinator – will need to be enabled by senior management to fulfil that responsibility. The attitudes of headteachers, deputy heads and governors to careers education and guidance are critical to securing the position of careers work in schools.

This Briefing:

- examines the attitudes of senior managers to careers work, and its links to raising achievement;
- reviews strategies for managing careers work in schools;
- identifies action required by managers, careers co-ordinators and governors.

The Briefing is based on a research enquiry undertaken by four NICEC Fellows – David Andrews, Bill Law, Barbara McGowan and Mary Munro. It has been written by David Andrews, who directed the project. The project was funded by the CfBT Trust.

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MANAGEMENT PERCEPTIONS

Senior management in schools generally have a positive attitude to careers education and guidance. They see it as being concerned with young people's futures and with helping them to make choices, not only about jobs but also about education and training.

They differ, however, in how they perceive its relationship with the wider aims of the school, particularly raising standards. Careers work can support strategies to raise achievement by:

- raising aspirations and increasing motivation through helping students identify educational and occupational goals;
- helping to develop the important learning skills of recording and reviewing experiences and achievements, and of target-setting and planning future action;
- making the school curriculum more relevant to the world beyond school;
- contributing to the development of information skills and communication skills.

Three perspectives can be identified:

- The *positively supportive* view: that careers work is not only of value to students in its own right but also makes a positive contribution to the school's work of raising achievement.
- The *neutral* view: that good-quality careers work is of value to students in helping them with key decisions and transitions, but has little or no impact on other aspects of schooling – neither supporting, nor diverting attention away from, the achievement agenda.
- The *distractive* view: that although careers work may be worthwhile in itself, it represents a distraction from the school's main agenda of raising achievement.

Where careers work is perceived by all parties – senior managers, careers co-ordinators and governors – as being positively supportive of strategies to raise achievement, and where such views are communicated clearly to other staff and to parents, careers work is likely to be seen as a *whole-school* responsibility. Where a neutral view is adopted, careers work is likely to be *segmented* as a separate activity. Where the distractive view is held, it is likely to be *marginalised*.

On the limited basis of the ten schools covered in the NICEC enquiry, which perspective is held seems unrelated to the school's socio-economic circumstances or its academic performance. What seems to matter more is the extent to which the relationship between careers work and other aspects of the school's work has been explored in debates within the school.

MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

In its guidance to schools and colleges on good practice, the DfEE has identified as one of the key principles of good quality careers education and guidance 'clearly defined senior management support'. Careers teachers, when they meet and discuss their work, frequently refer to the importance of senior management support.

Where careers co-ordinators ask for the commitment of senior management, they appear to be seeking:

- *Support*: senior management taking an interest in, and giving their attention to, careers work (even where it is recognised that the careers co-ordinator is doing a good job);
- *Resources*: senior management allocating resources for careers work, e.g. non-contact time, curriculum time, a budget, in-service training, an appropriate responsibility allowance.
- *Influence*: a position for the co-ordinator within the school's management structures which enables him/her to fulfil the job senior management has given him/her.
- *Leadership*: senior managers providing leadership and vision for careers work.

Senior managers feel that they demonstrate their commitment through:

- *Support*: attending major careers events organised by the careers co-ordinator; offering an 'open door' to the careers co-ordinator.
- *Resources*: reducing the careers co-ordinator's teaching load and not making him/her a form tutor; providing timetable time for careers work; encouraging the careers co-ordinator to participate in training; offering an appropriate responsibility allowance.
- *Influence*: putting the careers co-ordinator on the heads of department group and inviting him/her to attend senior management meetings as and when relevant.

Interestingly, 'leadership' does not appear in this latter list. Senior managers are committed to careers work, often to a greater extent than is anticipated. Where careers co-ordinators perceive there to be a lack of commitment, this is frequently because the commitment either has not been communicated or has not been reflected in tangible forms of support.

The careers co-ordinators' suggestion that the senior managers should provide the leadership and vision for careers work may indicate the cause of the problem. Careers co-ordinators cannot sit back and wait for support from preoccupied senior managers and busy, uninformed governors. They need actively to seek their commitment and associated forms of support. It is the careers co-ordinator who, having been given responsibility for careers work, should be developing the 'leadership' vision and getting it endorsed by senior managers and governors.

MANAGING CAREERS WORK

ROLES AND PROCESSES

The careers co-ordinator's role is to plan the school's careers education and guidance programme, to support colleagues delivering the programme, and to report on progress to senior managers.

A distinction needs to be drawn between:

- *Co-ordination*: ensuring that the various elements of the careers provision are planned and are delivered in the appropriate sequence.
- *Management*: ensuring that the careers provision is effectively integrated into the organisation of the school and that it is reviewed, evaluated and developed.

Careers work in schools is often *co-ordinated* effectively, but is not always *managed* to the same extent as other areas of the school's work. This may be related to the fact that co-ordination remains within the control of the careers co-ordinator, while management requires the careers co-ordinator to work effectively with the senior management team.

Indicators of the relative lack of attention to management are that the careers co-ordinator often does not meet regularly with his or her line manager to review progress and seek support, and has not been asked to produce an annual review and development plan for careers work. This contrasts with the situation in other curriculum areas, particularly the traditional academic subjects where, as a matter of course, the department produces an annual development plan that feeds into the whole-school plan. Also, it is far from universal practice that careers co-ordinators attending courses make an appointment with their line managers to discuss the course's implications for the development of careers work in the school.

Careers co-ordinators are not held accountable for careers work in the same way that heads of departments are held accountable for the curriculum area for which they have responsibility. The latter are accountable for students' achievements, but careers co-ordinators are not similarly accountable for students gaining the desired outcomes (whether learning outcomes or destinations) from careers work. Where review discussions are arranged between the careers co-ordinator and his or her line manager, the focus is mainly on provision rather than gains, i.e. accountability is focused on the programme rather than its outcomes.

There is a need to move from co-ordination to management. In seeking to manage its careers work effectively, a school should start by taking stock of its current provision. Such provision needs to be both *monitored*, to see if it happened as planned, and *reviewed*, to see how well it went. But it also needs to be *evaluated*, to see if the students gained from the provision.

POSITION IN THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

Careers co-ordinators are not always located in the most appropriate places within school management structures to do the job expected of them by senior managers.

Some are members of the heads of department group. This confers status and provides opportunity to influence decision-making in the school. But the careers co-ordinator needs also to be enabled to work with middle managers responsible for other aspects of the school's work with which careers work has links, e.g. the RoA co-ordinator, the head of sixth form, the SEN co-ordinator, the librarian, the heads of year. When careers co-ordinators talk about the need for status, this is frequently related less to money and more to position in management structures.

NEGOTIATING THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Practice with respect to senior management involvement in negotiating the partnership agreement with the careers service varies considerably.

A 1995 Ofsted survey of careers education and guidance in schools found that too often senior managers perceived such agreements as a means through which the careers service could determine its priorities. Part of the explanation may be that senior managers were insufficiently involved in the process. But another factor is that, while the careers service representatives enter these negotiations with a clear idea of the targets they need to meet, schools do not always enter the negotiations with the same clarity of objectives. If the school were to have some well-defined 'targets', derived from a development plan for careers work, the negotiation would become more of a genuine partnership activity.

For this to work effectively, both the careers co-ordinator (with his or her direct experience of managing the programme) and the senior manager (with his or her knowledge of the overall priorities of the school and resources available) would need to be involved. The most efficient use of time would be for the careers co-ordinator to undertake the preliminary work and for the head or deputy to participate in the later stages of the negotiations.

RECRUITMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

A key function of senior managers is to select and appoint the right person to the job in the first place.

The general approach to recruiting careers co-ordinators differs significantly from the recruitment of heads of subject departments. While the latter posts are usually advertised externally, careers co-ordinators are almost invariably recruited internally. Often the selection procedure does not follow the formal approach of advertisement, application and interview, but merely consists of what one careers co-ordinator referred to as the 'tap-on-the-shoulder-in-the-corridor-in-July' approach. In many cases, the internal, informal procedures have yielded very good careers co-ordinators. But by not taking the opportunity to look at external candidates, schools may be missing out on people who might bring in new insights and enthusiasms, free of assumptions.

In very few schools has the issue of succession planning been considered. Much of the work is vested in one person, with the risk that if that member of staff were to leave, the careers programme could be vulnerable to collapse. Few schools have considered developing a second member of staff in this area or other strategies for maintaining continuity of provision.

INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNORS

Many schools have established a system whereby different governors are linked to different curriculum areas. This results in each curriculum area having at least one governor who is well informed about the department's work and who can then argue from that position in governors meetings when issues of policy, strategy and resources are being debated. The link governor can also provide a useful 'lay perspective' when the department is reviewing its work.

The notion of a link governor is less well established for careers work, even in schools where other curriculum areas have link governors. Where schools have linked a governor to the careers area, their role is often viewed in operational rather than strategic terms: for example, as a good source of contacts for such activities as mock interviews, work experience and employer talks.

Governors are appointed as representatives of the local community and it is entirely appropriate that they should be used as a good source of community contacts for the careers programme. There is also, however, an as-yet-underdeveloped role for the 'careers' link governor in assisting the monitoring and review of practice and the development of policy.

Governors often have a wide knowledge and understanding of the world of work. Working with the careers co-ordinator and senior managers, they can help to develop and implement an educational programme to enable students to learn about that world.

GAINING SUPPORT

Some careers co-ordinators have a reactive attitude to senior management support, waiting passively for such support to arrive. This is rarely likely to succeed. More proactive approaches, where the careers co-ordinator determines a strategy for seeking and gaining the support of senior managers, are more likely to be successful.

Careers work would benefit from being treated, in terms of its management, in a similar way to other curriculum areas, i.e. with a clear policy, linked to a development plan, which is implemented, and the subsequent practice monitored, reviewed and evaluated.

The first step would be to develop a policy for careers work in the school. The lead would be taken by the careers co-ordinator, but he or she would be encouraged to consult with:

- the link careers adviser from the local careers service company;
- other teachers, particularly those responsible for related aspects of the school's work such as records of achievement, PSE, etc.;
- governors and other representatives of the wider community served by the school, including local business.

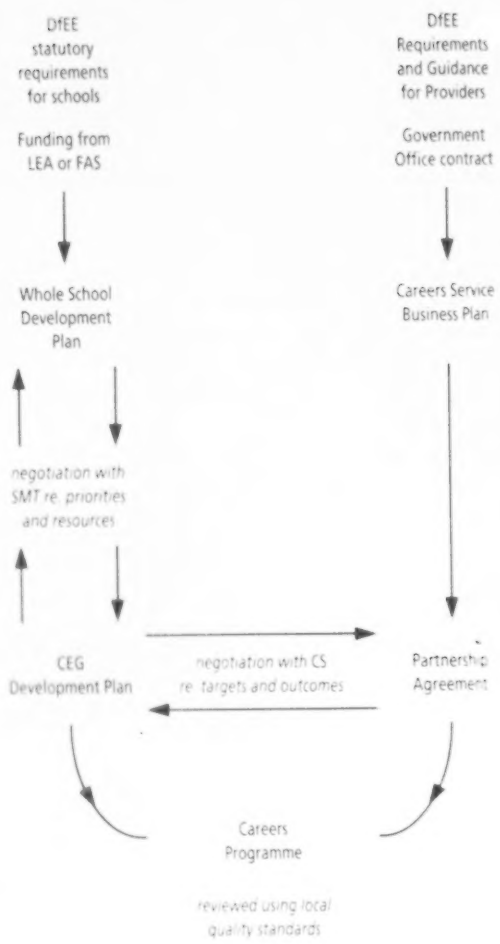
A draft policy would be agreed with senior management and then presented to the governing body for approval.

The next step would be to draw up a detailed and costed plan for careers work, based upon a review of current provision against the desired aims, objectives and learning outcomes identified in the policy. The development plan would be submitted for endorsement by senior managers as part of the annual whole-school review and development process. This would help to ensure that senior management's attention was drawn to careers work and it would also enable the careers co-ordinator to know what was possible and what was not.

Once modified by senior managers, the development plan would then form a secure basis from which the school would negotiate its Partnership Agreement with the local careers service. The school would enter these discussions confident of its requirements for students.

The resulting Partnership Agreement would then become a working document to which both school staff and careers service staff would refer when implementing the planned careers programme.

As the programme would have been planned jointly by the careers co-ordinator and careers adviser, and implemented through a similar joint arrangement, it would be important for it to be monitored, reviewed and evaluated jointly by both partners. It is here that any locally determined quality


DfEE statutory requirements for schools
Funding from LEA or FAS
DfEE Requirements and Guidance for Providers
Government Office contract
Whole School Development Plan
Careers Service Business Plan
negotiation with SMT re. priorities and resources
CEG Development Plan
negotiation with CS re. targets and outcomes
Partnership Agreement
Careers Programme
reviewed using local quality standards

standards or quality guidelines would come into play, providing a useful checklist against which the success or otherwise of the programme could be measured.

It would help to ensure improved quality of provision if, throughout the management process described above, the focus could be as much on gains as on provision. This would begin with including student outcomes in the policy, continue with relating development targets and the content of the Partnership Agreement to those outcomes, and conclude with reviewing and evaluating the provision against the intended outcomes.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

ACTION BY MANAGERS

In helping the school's careers co-ordinator to do his or her job effectively, the senior manager with line-management responsibility should:

- support the careers co-ordinator in developing a policy;
- request an annual review and development plan for careers work in the school;
- participate in the latter stages of negotiating the Partnership Agreement with the careers service;
- ask the careers co-ordinator to account for the achievements of the careers programme.

Setting a framework for this work will involve the line manager and careers co-ordinator meeting formally on a regular basis to review progress. It will also involve placing the careers co-ordinator in an appropriate position within the school's management structures to enable him or her to work with relevant colleagues.

Senior managers should give due consideration to the means by which careers co-ordinators are recruited. At a bare minimum, a job description and personal specification should be prepared, the post should be advertised, and candidates should be asked to make formal applications and selected through competitive interviews. There would be added advantages in seeking both external and internal applicants.

A further action for managers is to plan for succession. If the careers programme is to become securely integrated into the organisation, thought needs to be given to developing a second member of staff, possibly as an assistant careers co-ordinator. This would help to share the workload but would also help to ensure continuity of provision should the careers co-ordinator move on or not be available for a period of time.

Senior managers should also pay due attention to the professional development needs of the careers co-ordinator. This will involve helping the co-ordinator to identify appropriate training courses, including courses on management skills as well as those focused on careers work. It will also involve reviewing with the co-ordinator both the outcomes of such training and its implications for the school.

ACTION BY CAREERS CO-ORDINATORS

Too often careers co-ordinators perceive themselves as victims of a lack of support. One of the skills they need to acquire is that of lobbying for senior management support. This could include taking a more proactive approach to writing a policy, to producing a development plan or to presenting a report on achievements and progress in relation to careers work in the school. A well-researched and well-presented case for additional resources and/or attention is often rewarded with a positive response.

Tactics could include:

- presenting senior managers with a succinct digest of new initiatives in the field of careers work, together with a brief commentary of how they could be used to the benefit of students in the school;
- presenting a report on the current position of careers work in the school, following a critical self-review of the provision, together with ideas for its further development.

ACTION BY GOVERNORS

Governors represent the community which the school seeks to serve and for entry into which careers work helps students to prepare. They are, therefore, a rich source of help and assistance to the careers programme. There would be real advantages in linking a governor to the careers aspect of the school's work.

A link governor could be helped to become well informed about careers work, so as to:

- represent its interests at governors meetings;
- add a valuable lay perspective to discussion about policy, development plans and reviews of practice;
- be part of the selection panel for careers co-ordinator appointments;
- seek reports, probably annually, from the careers co-ordinator.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The findings of the project are reported in full in:

Andrews, D., Law, B., McGowan, B. and Munro, M. (1998). *Managing Careers Work in Schools: the Roles of Senior Managers, Careers Co-ordinators and Governors*. NICEC Project Report. Cambridge: CRAC.

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